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SUBJECT: GOT OFFICIALS PRESS CODEL SPECTER ON CONTINUED
U.S. ENGAGEMENT IN IRAQ

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Turkish officials believe the U.S. must remain in Iraq to ensure the country's future as a unified state. They also see increased involvement by the United Nations as an asset. Senator Specter argued that Iraqi political leaders have had sufficient time to establish a power-sharing arrangement and pass legislation critical to the nation's future, but have squandered it with factional squabbling. He said the American people have seen too many American casualties sacrificed for a country whose leaders are unwilling to compromise for their own nation's future. GOT officials also warned against connecting the events of 1915 to genocide and the impact an Armenian Genocide Resolution in the U.S. Congress would have on U.S.-Turkish relations. They also discussed with Specter the efficacy of sanctions on Iran, engagement with Syria, and the need for results in the fight against the terrorist PKK. END SUMMARY

12. (C) Senator Arlen Specter met on August 24 with MFA Undersecretary Apakan, Deputy Undersecretary for Americas Berk, Director General for Americas Ocak, Director General for Security Affairs Guven, and Americas Desk director Ercin. Specter met separately with GOT Iraq Coordinator Oguz Celikkol.

STAY ENGAGED IN IRAQ

13. (C) Specter said that the American public was very angry about the situation in Iraq. There has been almost no progress and he will not support further funding. Apakan indicated that Turkey was very engaged with the Iraqis, noting the August 7-8 visit of PM Maliki and the August 23-24 visit of VP Hashimi. Apakan said his message to the Iraqis, and the U.S., is that there has to be an internal political process that engages the Sunnis and brings them into power for Iraq to survive as a strong, federal state. A government whose main pillars are Shiites and Kurdish tribal leaders will not lead to success. A failure by the U.S. in Iraq would be a failure for all those interested in Iraq's future, including Turkey. Amb. Celikkol underscored the

point in his meeting, saying precipitous withdrawal from Iraq by the U.S. would leave the country open to a battle for influence by neighboring states, including Iran, bring about a very bloody civil war, and endanger the security and future of the entire region.

14. (C) Apakan said Turkey believes the United Nations is the best actor to bring about the internal political process we all seek. Iran says it wants a unified government, Ocak said, but its actions supporting various factions call that into question. Apakan said that Turkey very openly tells Iran that it should keep its hands off of Iraq. Iran and its radical supporters in Iraq will have difficulty maintaining a jihad against the United Nations, particularly if neighboring states support the UN's participation. The Charge pointed out that the UN has been the target of attacks in the past in Iraq and, while necessary to the process, will not be a panacea. Apakan agreed, and added that the UN without the US is not a viable equation. But the UN needs to be the main facilitator of internal reconciliation. Celikkol noted the importance for the U.S. and other neighbors to continue to press PM Maliki to share power with the Sunnis, a point emphasized to GOT officials earlier in the day by Iraqi VP Hashimi.

15. (C) Specter questioned why U.S. troops should bear the full brunt of military operations, and asked whether a UN peacekeeping force could be put in place in Iraq. Ocak said that the UN would not put a peacekeeping force into place unless it saw a political process underway that would lead to peace and that would be supported by a peacekeeping force. Thus, the U.S. needs to support the UN in building the needed internal dialogue. Specter suggested neighboring states, including Turkey, consider putting their own troops into Iraq

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to replace departing American forces. Celikkol remarked that Turkey had offered to send 5,000 troops to Iraq two years ago but Iraq refused.

IRAN SANCTIONS

16. (C) Specter asked about the use of economic sanctions against Iran. Guven said that Turkey has not seen any effect from this or prior attempts at using economic sanctions on Iran. French, German, Russian and Chinese companies have ignored the sanctions, and the current high oil prices, and European demand for gas, all mean that sanctions are unlikely to really pressure the Iranians. Apakan added that the Shias are made happy by suffering, and that the sanctions perversely reinforce Iranian solidarity. Instead, the Turks said, there needs to be dialogue with the Iranians, who are deeply suspicious of other countries.

ENGAGING SYRIA

17. (C) Noting that he was in Damascus in December, Specter said he believes that the Syrians are key to solving many problems, including some in Iraq. Would a settlement between Syria and Israel on the Golan Heights get Syria to cut its support for Hizbollah and Hamas? Apakan said there was more hope for reconciliation between Syria and Israel than between Israel and the Palestinians, who are so deeply divided internally that it is hard to determine who is in charge of which faction. Apakan said he thought it would be possible to pull Syria away from Iran, but was more skeptical about separating them from Hizbollah and Hamas. Apakan noted that Turkey strongly supports the proposed Middle East Peace Conference and has offered to host the Conference. Turkey also will host the Neighbors of Iraq Ministerial meeting in October.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESOLUTION/PKK

18. (C) Apakan also raised the proposed congressional Armenian Genocide Resolution (AGR) as well as the fight against the PKK. He noted a long list of bilateral and international issues where Turkey is cooperating actively with the United States and will continue to do so. With a very loaded agenda, Turkey does not deserve this AGR, he noted, adding that it would damage bilateral relations and Turkey,s ability to work with the U.S. Turkey also is looking for more tangible support and results against PKK terrorism. Senator Specter said he would relay Turkey,s views to his colleagues.

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